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ACCOUNT
OF THE
PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
Corporation of BRISTOL,

In Execution of the

Act of Parliament
FOR

**The better Employing and Main-
taining the Poor of that City.**

by John Cary

L O N D O N :

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TO THE
RIGHT HONOURABLE
AND
HONOURABLE,
THE
Lords Spiritual and Temporal,
AND
Commons in Parliament
ASSEMBLED.

May it please your Honours,

I Humbly make bold to lay before
your Honour's an Account of our
Proceedings in the City of *Bri-*
stol on the Act of Parliament for
Erecting Hospitals and Work-houses for
the better employing and maintaining
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the Poor of that City, which passed in the first Sessions of the Parliament begun at *Westminster* the 22d of *November* 1695. whereby the Power invested in the Corporation commenced from the 12th of *May* 1696.

The first thing we did was to choose Four Guardians for each of our Twelve Wards, as the Statute does direct, which, with the Mayor and Aldermen, amounted to Sixty Guardians, and made up our Court.

The Court being thus constituted, at our first Meeting we chose our Officers appointed by the said Act, *viz.* a Governour, a Deputy-Governour, Twelve Assistants, a Treasurer, a Clerk, and a Beadle.

This being done, we ordered the Guardians who dwelt in each Parish, to bring in an account of all the Poor in their respective Parishes, their Names, Ages, Sexes, and Qualifications. Also an Account of the Charges expended for maintaining them in each of the last three Years, that so we might bring it to a *Medium*. We also appointed certain standing Rules for the better governing our Debates, and ordered all things done in the Court to be fairly enter'd in a Journal.

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We likewise considered which would be most for the Advantage of the Corporation, to build Work-houses, or to purchase such Houses, which being already built, might be altered and made fit for our purpose.

These things spent much time, and it was about the Month of *September* before we could settle the *Medium* of the Poor's Rates, in order to certify to the Mayor and Aldermen what Sum was necessary to be raised on the City for the next Year.

But here we met with an unexpected *Remora*, Mr. *Samuel Wallis* was succeeded in his Majoralty by Mr. *J. H.* and this Change made a great Alteration in our Affairs: For whereas the former had given us all the Incouragement we could expect from him, and had done us the honour to be our first Governour, the latter resolved to obstruct us all he could. And because the power of raising Money was vested in him and the Aldermen, he absolutely refused to put that Power in Execution.

This, together with his other Endeavours to Brow-beat the Corporation, kept us at a stand till *October* (97.) only our Court met, and discours't things,

and we laboured to keep up the Spirits of our Friends, who began to sink under these Discouragements, and to despair of Success, the Work seeming difficult enough in it self; our undertaking being nothing less, then to put to work a great Number of People, many of which had been habited to Laziness and Beggary; to civilize such as had been bred up in all the Vices that want of Education could expose them to; and to clothe, lodge, and feed them well, with the same Sum of Money which was distributed among them when they begg'd, lay in the Streets, and went almost naked.

Yet all this would not have discouraged us, could we have prevailed on Mr. Mayor to have joyned with us. We often sought it, and he as often refused us, till his time being expired, his Successor granted our Request; and then, having lost much time, we were forced to make large steps.

The first we made was, a Vote to take on us the Care of all the Poor of the City; and as I remember, this Vote passed in *October* or *November* 1697. though we had then no Money raised, nor could we expect any till after our
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Lady-day 1698. So that from the passing that Vote to this time is about Two Years.

The next step was to appoint a Committee of Twelve to hear the Complaints of the Poor, to relieve them, and set them at work; Six whereof were to go out every Month, and to be succeeded by Six more, to be chosen by Ballating.

We had formerly obtained from the Mayor and Common-Council, in the Majoralty of Alderman *Wallis*, the Grant of a Work-house, which then lay unoccupied, and the Court had appointed a Committee to place as many Girls in it as it would conveniently contain, both as to Lodging and Working. This is that we called the *New Work-house*.

But all things having stood still so long, we resolved now to lose no more time; yet we had no Money, nor could we expect any in less than Six Months from the Poor's Rates; therefore we re-resolved to make our several Loans for Twelve Months without Interest to the Corporation on the Credit of their Common Seal; in which Design many of the Citizens lent their Assistance, whereby we became soon Masters of a-

bout Six hundred pounds Stock. Likewise our Guardians, who were appointed to pay the Poor in their several Parishes, voluntarily advanced their weekly Payments, till they could be reimburs'd by the Treasurer. The other Stock we employed to furnish Beds and other Necessaries for our House, Clothes and Provisions for our Children to be taken in, and Materials for their Working.

We had now Two Committees ; one for the Poor , the other for the New Work-house.

The Committee for the Poor met twice every Week : And in this Committee we proceeded thus ;

First, We voted that the Poor of the City should be visited in their respective Parishes , and that new Poor's Rates should be made ; and accordingly we ordered the Guardians of each Parish to bring together the Poor on a certain Day in some convenient Place, where the Committee met, and without Partiality endeavoured to provide for every one according to their Wants. We likewise took notice of all the young Girls that were on our Poor's Books, and of such whose Parents took no due Care of them ;

them ; and these we recommended to the Committee of the New Work-house, to be taken in, and employed by them.

Our Poor's Rates we made in this manner : Every One that expected Relief came before us with their whole Families, except such as were impotent and could not come : In our Books we put down the Name of the Man, the Woman, and each Child ; together with the Qualifications of all , either as to Age, Health , Civility, &c. what each Person did or could get by the Week, and in what Employment. We likewise set down for what Reason the Charity was bestowed , that when that should cease, or we could find out any other way to provide for it , the Charity should likewise cease.

Having thus seen the state of all our Poor, and provided for them, the Committee sat twice a Week in the Publick Court, to hear and provide for all casual Complaints ; which we did in this manner ; We ordered that the Poor in their respective Parishes , should first apply themselves to their Guardian or Guardians, who were to relieve them as they saw fit, till the next Sitting of the Committee,

mittee, when they were to bring them up with their Complaints, if they were able to come ; and this we did, lest the Committee (three whereof made a *Quorum*) should be deceived ; who could not be supposed to know the state of all the Poor in the City , and by this means we had the Opinion of the Guardian of each Parish ; nor could he easily deceive us, because he brought the Poor with him, and thereby the Committee became Judges of the Matter laid before them. At these Meetings care was taken of the various Cases and Exigencies which offered, and in all things there was a regard, as much as could be, to put People on living by their own Labours.

To such as were sick , we gave Warrants to our Physician to visit them ; such as wanted the Assistance of our Surgeons were directed to them , and all were Relieved till they were able to work ; by which means the Poor having been well attended , were set at work again, who by neglect might with their Families have been chargeable to the Corporation ; for some we provided Clothes, for others Work ; where we found People careful , but wanted a
Stock

Stock to employ themselves and their Children, we either lent or gave it ; where they wanted Houses, we either paid the Rent, or became Security for it ; where we found them oppressed, we stood by them ; where Differences arose, we endeavoured to compose them ; so that in a little time all the Complaints of the Poor came to this Committee, (which saved our Magistrates a great deal of trouble) and care was taken that none went away unheard.

The Committee at first sat twice a Week, but now only once in a Fortnight ; not that we grew slack in the Care of our Poor, but because their Number being so much abated by those received into our several Work-houses, the Business does not require their meeting oftner.

The other Committee, (viz.) That for the New Work-house, having furnished it in order to receive in the young Girls, first began with such as were recommended to them by the Committee for the Poor ; and this Method hath been generally observed ever since, both by that Committee, and also by the Committee since chosen for our other Work-house ; not that either
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of them depends on the other, but because the first application for Relief is made to the Committee for the Poor.

But before we took in the Girls, we first considered of proper Officers to govern them; and these consisted of a Master, whose Business was to receive in Work, and deliver it out again, and to keep the Accounts of the House, &c.

A Mistress, whose Business was to look after the Kitchen and Lodgings, to provide their Meals at set times, and other things which related to the Government of the House.

Tutresses to teach them to Spin, under each of which we designed to put Five and twenty Girls.

A School-Mistress, to teach them to Read.

Servants in the Kitchen, and for washing, &c. but these we soon discharged, and caused our biggest Girls to take their Turns every Week.

We also appointed an old Man to keep the Door, and to carry forth and fetch in Work, and such kind of Services.

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Being thus provided , we received in One hundred Girls, and set them to work at Spinning of Worsted Yarn ; all which we first caused to be stript by the Mistress, washed, and new clothed from Head to Foot ; which, together with wholsome Dyet at set hours, and good Beds to lye on, so encouraged the Children, that they willingly betook themselves to their work.

We likewise provided for them Apparel for *Sundays* ; they went to Church every Lord's Day ; were taught their Catechisms at home , and had Prayers twice every Day ; we appointed them set Hours for working, eating , and playing ; and gave them leave to walk on the Hills with their Tutresses, when their work was over, and the weather fair ; by which means we won them into Civility, and a love to their Labour. But we had a great deal of trouble with their Parents, and those who formerly kept them, who having lost the sweetness of their Pay, did all they could to set both the Children and others against us ; but this was soon over.

Hitherto things answered above our Expectations ; our Children grew sober, and worked willingly , but we very
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much questioned , whether their Labours at the Rates we were paid, would answer the Charge of their Maintenance ; and if not, our great doubt was how we might advance it, without prejudicing the Manufactures.

To clear the first, we supposed our selves in a fair way ; having appointed their Diets to be made up of such Provisions as were very wholsome, afforded good nourishment, and were not costly in price, (*viz.*) Beef, Pease, Potatoes, Broath, Pease-porridge, Milk-porridge, Bread and Cheese, good Beer, (such as we drank at our own Tables) Cabage, Carrots, Turnips, &c. in which we took the Advice of our Physician, and bought the best of every sort. They had three Meals every day , and as I remember, it stood us (with Soap to wash) in about Sixteen pence *per* Week for each of the One hundred Girls. We soon found the effect of their Change of Living, Nature being well supported, threw out a great deal of foulness, so that we had generally Twenty down at a time, in the Measels, Small-pox, and other Distempers ; but by the Care of our Physician , and the Blessing of God on his Endeavours, we never buried but Two , though we have
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had seldom less than One hundred in the House at any time.

Having thus provided for their Dyets, we next appointed their times of working ; which in the Summer was Ten hours and a half every Day, and an hour less in the Winter ; by which means we answered the two Objections raised against the Poor, (*viz.*) That they will not work, and that they spend what they get in fine feeding.

But we soon found, that the great cause of begging did proceed from the low Wages for Labour ; for after about Eight Months time, our Children could not get half so much as we expended in their Provisions. The Manufacturers, who employed us, were always complaining the Yarn was spun coarse, but would not advance above Eight pence *per* pound for spinning , and we must either take this, or have no work. On the other side , we were labouring to understand how we might distinguish, and put a value on our Work, according to its fineness. This we did by the Snap Reel , which when we were Masters of , the Committee made an Order, That the Master should buy
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in a Stock of Wool , and spin it up for our own Accounts, and then proceeded to set the Price of Spinning by the Snap Reel, wherein we endeavoured to discourage coarse work, and to encourage fine , because we saw the latter was likely to bring most profit, not only to the Poor, but to the Kingdom in general. We likewise ordered some things to be made of the several sorts of Yarn, at the Rates we had set them ; and on the whole , we found the Commodities made of fine Yarn, though they were much better than those made of course, yet stood us in little more ; because what the one exceeded in the charge of Spinning , was very much made good in abatement of the Quantity used. We therefore sent to the Manufacturers , and shewed them what Experiments we had made ; but finding them still unwilling to advance above the old Rate , the Committee voted that they would give Employment to all the Poor of the City, who would make application to them, at the Rates we offered to work, and pay them ready Money for their Labour.

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We soon found we had taken the right course, for in a few Weeks we had Sale for our fine Yarn as fast as we could make it, and they gave us from Eight pence to Two shillings *per* pound for spinning the same Goods, for which a little before they paid but Eight pence, and were very well pleased with it, because they were now able to distinguish between the fine and course Yarn, and to apply each sort to the use for which it was most proper: Since which they have given us Two shillings and six pence *per* pound for a great many pounds, and we spin some worth Three shillings and six pence *per* pound spinning.

By this means we had the pleasure of seeing the Children's Labour advanced, which a little before I came up, amounted to near Six pounds *per* Week, and would have been much more, but that our biggest Girls we either settle forth, or put in the Ktchin; and those we receive in being generally small, are able to do little for some time after.

The encouragement we had received on this beginning, put us on proceeding further: The Court resolved to purchase a great Sugar-House, out of the

B Money

Money directed by the Act to be raised for building of Work-houses, and fit it up for receiving in the remainder of the Poor, (*viz.*) ancient People, Boys, and young Children; which was accordingly done, and a Committee was appointed to manage it. This we called the *Mint Workhouse*, because it had been lately hired by the Lords of the Treasury for that Use.

The Committee began to take in the Boys in *August* last; these we clothed, dyeted, and governed, much after the same manner as we had done the Girls, but put them on a different Employment, (*viz.*) spinning of Cotten Wool, and weaving of Fustians: We have now about One hundred of them together, who settle well to their work, and every day mend their hands; they get us already Six pounds *per* Week; they are likewise taught to Read, and we shall hereafter teach them to Write.

We next took in our ancient People; and here we had principally a regard to such as were impotent, and had no Friends to help them, and to such as we could not keep from the lazy Trade of Begging; these we clothed as we saw they needed, and put on such Employments as were fit for their Ages and Strengths,

Strengths ; having our Eyes chiefly on those to which they were bred ; we found it difficult at first to bend them down to good Orders, but by degrees we have brought them under Government.

Then we called in all the Children that were on our Poor's Books, and put them under Nurses ; those who can speak and go are carried down into the School to learn their *A, B, C, &c.* As they grow up, we shall put them into the working Rooms.

The Boys are kept at a distance from the ancient People, who do also lodge in distinct Apartments, the Men in several Chambers on one Floor, and the Women on another ; all do something, though perhaps some of their Labours comes to little, yet it keeps them from Idleness ; Both the Old and Young attend Prayers twice a day, (except the Bedridden, for whom other Care is taken) and go to Church twice on *Sundays*.

We have now three standing Committees, (*viz.*) For the Poor, for the New Work-house, and for the Mint Work-house : The first gives all Directions, and makes all Allowances, for the Poor, without whose Order no Guardian can act any

thing considerable, except in Cases of absolute Necessity, which at the next Meeting of the Committee he must give an Account of, and desire their Approbation. The other two Committees have power to act in the Affairs of that Workhouse for which they are chosen: They receive in both Old and Young; they bind forth Apprentices, Correct, order the Dyet as they please, oversee the working, sell the Manufactures when made, order the payment of all Moneys, which cannot be done unless the Note be sign'd by the Chair-man; and generally direct every thing relating to those Houses.

The Accounts are made up thus: The Treasurers Account is audited every Year by a Committee chosen for that purpose; at which time he is succeeded by another Treasurer, chosen by the Court: The Accounts of the Guardians who pay the Poor in their several Parishes are audited every three Months, by a select Committee chosen likewise by the Court, and are then paid by the Treasurer: The Accounts for each Workhouse are audited by the respective Committee every Month, when the Master adjusts, not only his Account of Cash, but also of each particular *Specie* of Goods he hath under

under his Care, the Ballance whereof is still carried forward to the next, which when allowed of is signed by the Chairman : And the Account for each House is so stated, that it shews at one sight, what the House is indebted ; what Debts are outstanding, and from whom ; what Goods remain in the House, and the Quantity of each *Specie*.

At the making up these Accounts nothing (unless very trivial) is allowed, for which an Order is not produced, or found entered in our Books, so that 'tis very difficult to wrong the Corporation of any thing, if any Guardians should endeavour it.

These Committees keep their Journal Books, wherein all they do is fairly transcribed, and signed by the Chairman.

This is what at present occurs to my Memory touching our Work-houses at *Bristol* ; I have been as brief as the nature of the thing would admit : The Success hath answered our Expectation ; we are freed from Beggars, our old People are comfortably provided for ; our Boys and Girls are educated to Sobriety, and brought up to delight in Labour ; our young Children are well lookt after,
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and not spoiled by the neglect of ill Nurses ; and the Face of our City is so changed already, that we have great reason to hope these young Plants will produce a vertuous and laborious Generation, with whom Immorality and Prophaneness may find little Incouragement ; nor does our hopes appear to be groundless, for among Three hundred Persons now under our Charge within Doors, there is neither Cursing nor Swearing, nor prophane Language, to be heard, though many of them were bred up in all manner of Vices, which neither *Bridewell* nor Whippings could fright them from, because, returning to their bad Company for want of Employment, they were rather made worse then bettered by those Corrections ; wherers the Change we have wrought on them is by fair means. We have a *Bridewel*, *Stocks* and *Whipping-Post*, always in their sights, but never had occasion to make use of either.

What is done in that City I humbly hope may be carried on by the same steps throughout the Kingdom, if the Bill for that purpose now depending in Parliament, doth obtain the Sanction to be past into an Act. The Poor may be set at work, their Wages advanced without danger to
our

our Manufactures, and they thereby enabled to live on their own Labours, whereby the Charge of the Poor's Rates may be saved, and a great many worthy Benefactors encouraged to give, when they shall see their Charity so well disposed of. This I have great reason to hope, because we have had near One thousand pounds freely given to us within the compass of one Year, and much thereof by Gentlemen who dwelt at a Distance from us, only were willing to Encourage a Work they saw likely to be carried on, which might be of good Example to the Nation.

I am,

with all dutiful respect,

Right Honourable

and Honourable,

Your Honours

most obedient Servant

JOHN CARY.